



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Three Poets of Three Nations

Je crois en ce brin d'herbe qui pousse sur mon abri. . . .
. . . . Je crois ce que je vois.

It is obvious that Cammaerts strives towards the simple wistfulness of the folk-song and the startling naiveté of the modern; but his naiveté lacks subtlety and his song is too light ever to resemble folk-song.

Life Immovable, by Kostas Palamas; translated by A. E. Phoutrides. Harvard University Press.

Kostas Palamas is—so an American-Greek professor and a French critic assure us—"incontestably the greatest" European poet of these days. To call anyone "the greatest poet," without telling us just how great, is a miserable stunt of poor criticism. Well, how great?

We are helpless too. We can't say. The translator has put a mask on his face—not a cheap mask, but incontestably a mask. "Evil demons seized my all," "My frame is bent," "thrice-beautiful," "thrice-happy," "thrice-wonderful," "magic beauty's charms"—if these be features of a face, the face is certainly not that of the greatest poet. But we perceive that a mask is on it: for even in the translation Kostas Palamas' size can be guessed by the *quantity* of his poetry: descriptions are minute to the tiniest particular, and symbols are presented to the faintest line of their contours. One may not, however, call these descriptions startling or exact, because the language of the translator is not such; and, for the same reason, one may not call these symbols real. A gorgeous symbolism which, in order to succeed, demands the full strength and precision of pure words, is

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

wasted by the correct—I said not a cheap mask . . . quite an expensive one indeed, but ugly too—but cold and limp English of the translation. It is as though some of the beauty of the original had forced its way through the hurdles of the professor's English. Some very lovely words in this book strike one as helplessly accidental. And one does not know whether, when the gorgeousness becomes pompousness—which happens often—the change is due to uninspired translating or to the overmuch self-satisfied sense of form of the Greek national genius.

To be sincere, we suspect that superlative, "greatest." There's too much of the old mythological-rhetorical high-brow stuff—too poetical for these days of gas masks and Einstein Theories; and we cannot blame that on the translator. There is too much of the involved, long-winded symbolism that makes Hawthorne boresome to modern readers educated to the brevity and the sharpness of, say, a Carl Sandburg or an Alfred Kreymborg.

Altogether, it is a puzzling proposition: I am reminded of seeing once two English translations of that truly "greatest" poet, Giosue Carducci; and of being convinced how few were the chances that an American who does not know Italian would ever get the beauty of his work. How easy it had been for both translators to make palaver and doggerel out of Carducci's beautiful *Ode alle Fonti del Clitumno!*

And as for the rest of the European poets, we ask how a comparison of Kostas Palamas with Jean de Bosschères

Three Poets of Three Nations

would run. De Bosschères would be "just Greek" to Palamas, and Palamas much worse to de Bosschères.

One thing definitely strikes me: Palamas is a promoter of Neo-Greek, of a living language versus an ancient dead one; and the language of the translation is stale and pseudo-Elizabethan.

The Soothsayer, by Verner von Heidenstam. Four Seas Co.

Here's another "greatest," a Nobel Prize winner. If there was any beauty in the original only God or a Swedish-speaking man may know. The idea is, "Thou canst not serve two gods;" and the play is a play of ancient Greece, where you were supposed to serve not only two but a hundred gods at once. And the play shows the tragedy and horror of serving two gods instead of only one—isn't it awkward?

But, all in all, what lack of faith in our beautiful world makes these poets find refuge in stale legends of ancient Greece? And what perversion is this of a man who has no enthusiasm for us living, and finds grandiloquent words to give to a bunch of dead men? The explanation is this: "Heidenstam has been the great champion in Sweden of the more classical school"—so says the cover writer; and he goes on speaking of the "beautiful in literature" and other such ugliness.

Emanuel Carnevali